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Father Darkleaf

by Calvin Robinson

Life has its brighter moments, despite the lengthening list of national and world problems. Such a moment came at precisely 3:00 Sunday at my modest residence on Martha Street. I was attempting to do two things at once . . . watch a TV basketball game with one eye and read the new bestseller book Chesapeake with the other. Brightleaf appeared at the den door and whispered for me to tiptoe into the living room. Not knowing what to expect and fearing some major development, I did so and held at the windowside bird feeder a glorious, beautiful Red Cardinal. Hours earlier I had filled the feeder with smallbird seed. The Cardinal was eating daintily, not with the sparrow's wild abandonment or the sagacious minibites of the chickadee. Did not linger, but he will return and I like to think this same bird has been with us for several years. Ah yes, sing me no song, just a friendly visit.

* * *

There is no detente between cats and birds, but I was told by the friendly store manager where I purchased smallbird seed that his dog watched birds eat scattered seed and seemed a bit jealous that they received such attention.

* * *

The football season will wind down with the upcoming Super Bowl game. In that connection, I had a dream. I dreamed that I invented a new football. Had the qualities of a boomerang. If it was not caught by the intended receiver, it returned unshorn to the passer. Heavens to Betsy, could revolutionize the game.

* * *

ACHS is doing well in basketball. Both boys and girls won over Brookville, and are ready to challenge Amherst, the Seminole League leader. School semester exams are behind us and student activities keep everyone busy.

* * *

For no particular reason, I fell to wondering how many books have the word "Appomattox" in the title. I have three. Bruce Catton's "A Stillness at Appomattox," which won a Pulitzer award; Burke Davis' "To Appomattox" and "South of Appomattox" by Burger and Bettersworth. The late local writer, Mary Louise Gills had a book about Appomattox but I do not recall its title, and the late Alfred O'Brien a book about three famous trees at Appomattox. Col. George Collins died before his book "Sweeney of Appomattox" could be published.

* * *

The rush to gain possession of gold reminds me that a salesman friend of mine set out to collect a mint condition gold coin of every denomination issued by the U. S. He carried his collection with him wherever he went.

* * *

January is birthday month of many Southern heroes. Such as Rob't E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Matthew Fontaine Maury and also our great poet and essayist, Edgar Allen Poe.

* * *

Been some time since I mentioned Slippery Rock College. Fine teachers college near Pittsburg. Well, Slippery Rock lost Saturday to Clarion College in basketball, 55 to 55.

* * *

What is the score on keeping New Year Resolutions? There is one you dare not break. . . keep "Appomattox, A Growing Town." Thanks for reading and seeya next week.

NEW SUPERVISORS - Two new members joined Dr. S. R. Lawson when the Appomattox County Board of Supervisors met last Friday. Dr. Lawson, center, was re-elected chairman of the board; J. Franklin Vaughan, right, of Stonewall District was elected vice-chairman; and the other new member, on the left, is Horace W. Coleman, Jr. of Clover Hill District. Lawson represents Southside District of the county.

Soil-survey plan reviewed by board of supervisors

This year, for the first time, Appomattox County is ranked in the state's top ten counties being considered for a soil survey by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, according to information given the board of supervisors Friday by Robert E. McClenny, Jr. of the Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District.

In 1974 the board met with representatives from VPI Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, and Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Commission and asked to be placed on a priority list and be given consideration for a soil survey for the county.

Counties are rated based on local needs, state needs, available soils information and local contribution.

The board was asked to decide how much the county is willing to pay towards the cost of the survey, The soil survey program in Virginia is being underwritten by cost-sharing agreements with local governments in a cooperative undertaking between SCS, VPI and the counties.

There are 219,000 acres in the county less 1,320 acres of federal land. At a cost of $2.00 per acre, the survey would cost around $436,000 and the state has indicated that local cost-sharing has averaged from 20 to 25 percent, McClenny reported.

After much deliberation the board hesitantly resolved to spend 20 percent of the project's total cost and to spread payments over a five-year period if and when the survey is started. All in-kind services such as office space, clerical assistance, and equipment use could be deducted from the county's share of the cost.

The earliest the state would start the survey would be 1982, and the project would take four to six years to complete, according to McClenny.

County Extension Agent Jim Smith told the supervisors that the soil survey was much more detailed than his office soil analysis, and is invaluable to engineering projects, road construction, and the farming community.

Dr. S. R. Lawson, board chairman, said he felt there would be a need for an "educational type" meeting, open to the public, so that the board could receive in-put from citizens.

If in two years the state is ready to begin the soil survey and the board feels it cannot proceed with the plans at that time, the county would still remain on the priority list.

At the organizational meeting of the board Friday, Dr. Lawson was re-elected chairman. The meeting date was set for the second Friday of each month at 9 a.m. in the board room of the Clerk's Office.

W. R. Britton, Jr., Appomattox town manager and special projects secretary to the board, formally notified the supervisors Friday of the town's intent to install a 12-inch water line from the existing town system to the new million-gallon water tank located west of Route 658.

Britton said that all water line easements, over 2 ½ miles, have been received at no cost to the town. With the completion of this project there will be at least five to six days water storage in the system that could be used in case of emergency situations. At present, there is only enough storage for a day.

Britton informed the supervisors that the Appomattox Cold Homes Program is working and has helped many people in the county who do not receive assistance from state or federal programs.

At school board meeting

Lunch prices, salaries examined

BY BECK HUDSON

Students in Appomattox County public schools paid five cents more for school lunches beginning Monday of this week.

The increase was approved by the school board at their meeting Jan. 9. Effective Jan. 14, school lunches for kindergarten through grade six students advanced from 45¢ to 50¢; students in grades 7 through 12 are now paying 55¢ per lunch instead of 50¢ and adult lunches advanced from 75¢ to 80¢ per lunch. The increase does not affect students qualifying for free lunches or reduced-price lunches, and the cost of milk was not changed.

Mrs. Bea Mills, chairman of salary committee for the Appomattox County Education Association, presented to the board a salary proposal for 1980-81.

The salary scale for teachers, an increase of 7 percent plus a step increment, ranges from $9,900 for a beginning teacher to $14,884 for a teacher with 16 years experience. The committee asked that a 9 percent increase be taken into consideration.

For all other personnel, the ACEA committee proposed a 7 percent increase. For teacher-aides the scale would range from $3,600 to $4,436 in eight steps. Secretaries on ten-month contracts would begin at $4,815 and with ten years experience would receive $6,982.

Board members approved the special education plan for 1980-81, which includes a program of comprehensive services for handicapped students.

The estimated cost of the program for 1980-81 is $228,386 as compared to $171,222 for 1979-80 session.

Minor changes are anticipated in the program for the 80-81 school session. Two positions, a teacher of emotionally disturbed students and a teacher for students with learning disabilities, are included. These two positions are included in the current plan but were not filled due to a teacher shortage. Also included in the plan for next year is a full-time visiting teacher, a position that is half-time for the 1979-80 session.

A vocational education plan for the 1980-81 school session was also approved by the board.

Although the plan will generally be the same as the present vocational education program, it includes a request for state funds to implement an industrial arts program and to reinstate the electricity program if there is sufficient interest shown by students and if local matching funds are available.

Adopted by the board at the Jan. 9 meeting was a revised maternity leave policy which becomes effective July 1, 1980.

The revised policy limits the number of sick-leave days an employee may use to those related to the actual illness or disability as specifically designated by a physician. Fringe benefits will continue only during the time the employee is receiving a salary from the school board. If on leave and not receiving salary from the board, the employee may continue health and/or life insurance at her own expense by paying the full amount of premium monthly to the school board.

The board entered into an agreement with VEPCO for the purchase of electric service covering the period July 1, 1979 through June 30, 1982.

Effective July 1, 1979 the base energy charge was 4.105¢ per kilowatt hour, effective July 1, 1980 the rate will be 4.457¢ per KWH, and the charge will be 4.708¢ per KWH effective July 1, 1981.

The board approved a resolution to establish a joint committee of control to establish a regional school in Lynchburg to serve students in need of special services. Mrs. Ruth Webb, board member, was appointed to serve on the committee.

The proposed regional school would service profoundly handicapped students at the lower level and the emotionally disturbed at the higher level. The board would not be obligated for any funds unless Appomattox County students were attending the proposed regional school.

Schools close Friday

Appomattox County Public School students will not attend school on Friday, Jan. 18. This date is scheduled in the school calendar to give teachers an opportunity to finalize first semester records. The last date of the first semester was Tuesday, Jan. 15.

Students will receive report cards on Tuesday, Jan. 22. Parents are requested to review the report cards carefully. If you have questions, you should contact the principal of the school your child attends.

Town approves water system bid

Bid documents for a waterline project to connect the existing town water system to the new million-gallon water tank were approved by the Appomattox Town Council Monday night.

In July of last year, the Town of Appomattox was notified that grant funds had been received in the amount of $151,000 to be used for water distribution system improvements in the town. The grant money will help purchase pipe for a water line to connect the existing system to the new water storage tank.

* * *

In 1976 Appomattox received a grant for about half of the amount it had sought, enough to install the water tank storage facility but no funds for water lines.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) had an additional $151,000 available, an amount earmarked for another project in Colonial Heights that was not used last year.

W. R. Britton, Jr., Appomattox town manager, at the request of council, contacted Fifth District Congressman W. D. Daniel to see if they could get this money by default since the town was on the standby list in 1978.

The town has received the funds and are proceeding with plans to purchase water lines to connect the system.

Bids on this project will be opened at 2 p.m. on Feb. 21 at the Town Office.

A request from York County for support of the Town of Appomattox for the General Assembly to lend financial assistance and other state aid to the 1981 Bicentennial Celebration was denied by council.

Council members also denied a request from the Virginia Municipal League, Virginia Association of Counties Land Use Task Force to donate towards a study of land use.

In other business, Britton was given approval by council to collect past due taxes, in the amount of approximately $3,000.

Traffic fatalities continue to drop locally, statewide, officials say

Traffic fatalities on local and state roadways appear to be on a steady decline, according to figures released by the Virginia State Police.

Traffic fatalities were reported in the Appomattox-Charlotte-Prince Edward area in 1979, including two deaths in Appomattox County, according to Sgt. Charles Fraley of the State Police.

While there were no traffic fatalities in Appomattox in 1978, the total for the tri-county area that year was seven, two more than this year.

Traffic fatalities totaled 19 in 1977, according to Fraley. This figure includes five who lost their lives on Appomattox roadways, six who died in Charlotte, and eight deaths in Prince Edward.

Statewide tentative figures indicate that 1,005 persons died in traffic accidents during 1979, 75 fewer than the preceeding year and the lowest figure since 1963, when 989 were killed.

State police attribute the decrease to the 55-mile-per-hour speed limit, and stricter enforcement of speed-limit laws.

"People are complying with the speed limit more now than before," according to Fraley. "Also, we're enforcing the 55 mile speed limit more strictly than ever," he added.

Fraley added that motorists may be reducing their speed voluntarily in order to conserve fuel in these energy-tight days. "There may be a reduced traffic flow figure, but we won't know for sure until those figures are in," he said.

Appomattox resident seeks 'place in the stars' through music

What's a Mifflinburg, Pa. native doing singing across the airwaves of Southcentral Virginia?

Appomattox Countians who tuned into Lynchburg television station, Channel 13, Saturday morning may be wondering just that.

Darrel Chilcote, a Pennsylvanian transplanted to Appomattox last August appeared on Channel 13's March of Dimes telegrama this weekend, playing his guitar and singing his songs for all of Southcentral Virginia to hear.

Chilcote, who works at the Times-Virginian printing office on Main Street in town, says his first love is music.

Much of Chilcote's music - which ranges from jazz to gospel - is original. The mainstay of his repertoire he classifies as "easy listening," with an emphasis on ballads, folk music and gospel.

"My mother wanted me to take guitar lessons when I was 10," notes Chilcote. "I took one lesson, then put the guitar down: I didn't particularly like it, and figured I'd never pick it up again. Then, when I was about 12, I decided to try it again. I got an instruction book, learned a few chord formations, figured out a few of my own, and then took it from there. I've been at it ever since."

Chilcote, who performs solo and prefers smaller crowds with which he can maintain close rapport, is no stranger to television. He has done numerous television charity benefits. "I did a lot of work for muscular dystrophy," he says.

One of the television benefits was broadcast from New York, and Chilcote felt that it was the Big Apple that he might get what all aspiring entertainers seek: "the big break."

"A lot of people said they really liked my music, and some even told me they thought I should have some of my music recorded," he recalls. "But the big break didn't come there; I'm still waiting for it."

Chilcote wants to get into music fulltime. "For right now, I'm taking things as they come, but I would like to make a career out of entertainment," he says.

He and his wife, Sharon, are contemplating a church tour this summer. "We are thinking about lining up some weekend trips, traveling to different churches to perform," he says.

But for now the Pennsylvania native is satisfied to remain in Appomattox, honing his abilities, and waiting for that one big break.

Darrell Chilcote

Stickers not required

The $2 license fee charged individuals with mobile homes is no longer required, according to Monte Mays, Appomattox County commissioner of revenue.

When mobile homes were re-classified as real estate, the license-fee law was repealed, Mays says.

A mobile home is now assessed the same as a house, and carries the same tax rate, Mays notes, even though mobile homes are actually personal property and are depreciated on an annual basis.